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SUBJECT: GUINEA'S LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS - PROGRESS REPORT

REF: A) CONAKRY 0485
B) CONAKRY 0604

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Guinea's voter registration process is off to a sluggish start due to logistical challenges, although recent developments indicate that some of the more problematic issues are approaching resolution. Challenges remain, but things appear to be moving forward, albeit slowly. A new target date for legislative elections has not been determined. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The UN chairs a regular, multi-lateral focal group meeting on Guinea's legislative elections at least twice monthly. Meeting participants include technical representatives from the EU, France, ECOWAS, Japan, and the US. NGOs such as IFES occasionally participate, as do Guinean Government officials. USAID representatives attended the two most recent meetings on October 8 and October 14. The Director of Political Affairs at the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs (MATAP) attended the October 14 meeting. The following information was reported in the meetings.

¶3. (SBU) The EU-financed voter registration campaign was launched in August, but has been slow to get underway due to various logistical challenges (reftel). As of October 14, approximately 1,426 out of 1,800 registrars had signed contracts and reported to their assigned registration districts. After earlier disagreements about the remuneration packages, most of the registrars have agreed to a payment of 800,000 GnF (\$165) a month for the contracted services, which is 200,000 GnF (\$41) more than originally planned. The unanticipated expense has resulted in a funding gap equal to approximately \$485,000. France and the EU indicated that they may be able to help cover this gap.

¶4. (SBU) Due to MATAP's delay in issuing payments because of budgetary constraints, the UN agreed on October 8 to advance the 200,000 GnF per person increase, which will be reimbursed by the GoG. During the October 14 meeting, MATAP announced that the ministry had finally received the budgeted 7.9 billion GnF (\$1.7 million) from the Ministry of Finance, which includes the money for the registrars.

¶5. (SBU) Another stumbling block has been the distribution of fuel to the registrars. MATAP stated that fuel from Conakry was in the process of being transported to centralized points in Boke, Mamou, Labe, Faranah, N'Zerekore, and Kankan.

¶6. (SBU) MATAP reported that the registration process had been successfully launched in Boke and Fria over the weekend. On October 18, MATAP and the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) broadcast a brief information program on the registration process over national television.

¶7. (SBU) The French representative announced that the French Embassy had recently sponsored a training program for 170 judges focusing on how to handle electoral disputes.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) Although the registration process was launched nearly two months ago, few people have actually been registered due to delays in deploying the registration teams, disagreements over compensation packages, and other technical issues. During an inter-ministerial meeting on October 10, the MATAP minister indicated that any GoG delays have occurred only because the ministry of finance refused to issue budgeted funds (reftel B). The release of funds earlier this week suggests that this issue may be resolved. Challenges remain, but things appear to be moving slowly forward. There still has been no discussion of a target date, although the MATAP representative told the group that the next date, once it is chosen, "will not change." END COMMENT.

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